

My name is Lisa Leibowitz. I live in Redding, CT with my husband and our two children, nine and 11 years old. Like most Americans, we were deeply affected by the unthinkable gun violence tragedy at Sandy Hook on December 14th. It has felt more personal for us, however, because of our proximity to Newtown and even more so because our children knew one of the young victims.

On Friday December 14th, my children found out that someone went into an elementary school less than half an hour from our home and shot 20 first graders. On the Monday after these shootings, shortly after being reassured by faculty and administration that they are safe when they are at school, my children both spent an hour in "lockdown" after a suspicious person was reported near a local train station. My daughter in the sixth grade spent this time in the dark, hiding under her desk. She was told by her teacher how they would exit the building if necessary and where they would go. Many kids were crying. My son in his fourth grade classroom spent the time sitting in silence on the floor up against a wall in the dark. One boy vomited, he was so afraid and anxious.

That same Monday, my kids also found out that a little boy they knew had been killed at Sandy Hook Elementary. After that, my son began to routinely ask me questions at bedtime about this boy's death and the impact it would have on his family. How many times had he been shot? Did it hurt him? If he was shot a lot of times, did he die right away? And would that hurt more or less? Would he go to Heaven?

These are questions *no* child should ever have to ask or wonder about. And even writing these words now, I feel sick. So when I hear on the news, see youtube videos, and read blogs by people who are talking about their right to bear arms and their freedoms being violated by those of us asking simply for some meaningful *common sense* gun regulation, *I* feel violated. And I find the solution of arming our teachers, as some states have already adopted, outrageous, frightening, and dangerous.

No one is asking responsible gun owners to give up their rights, or their guns for that matter. We're talking about common sense regulation, *reasonable* regulation. That being said, even if we were asking our fellow citizens to give up those rights, why would they not? If it might save the life of a child, wouldn't it be a sacrifice worth making?

On January 28th, I listened to four hours of astonishing testimony during the Gun Violence Working Group legislation hearing, mostly from the pro-gun agenda. I heard endless attacks on government and law enforcement, litanies of blatant distrust and insults. I heard one gun shop owner declare publicly that if any restrictions are placed on his gun ownership, if *any* legislation gets passed at all, he will become "a criminal". I heard another gun owner who lives in a rural area talk about her dog being shot and nobody doing anything about it. I'm not sure

what her point was, only that she *needs* to keep all her guns including her assault weapons with high-capacity magazines. I heard one gentleman talk about a home intrusion, actually a *potential* intrusion, and having only an aluminum baseball bat as defense. He vowed that he would never be in that position again. Is there not something between a baseball bat and an assault weapon with a large capacity magazine? No interim step or "happy medium"?

But more than any of the justifications I have heard for unfettered gun ownership is the ridiculous statement that "law-abiding citizens" are being penalized for the actions of criminals. This could not be more false. On the contrary, we (also law-abiding citizens) are trying only to protect ourselves and our fellow citizens - our innocent children - from increasingly escalating gun violence. And we are only asking for meaningful compromise.

Ultimately, what I hear from gun advocates is repetitive, senseless, and paranoid justification for maintaining the status quo. They resist *any and all* progress, change, or compromise in the name of "God-given rights".

The fact of the matter is that no rights are without restrictions and responsibilities. I may not be a law professor, but I know that there is ample legal and historical precedent for restriction to constitutional rights. The Second Amendment does NOT entitle us to unfettered, unrestricted gun ownership.

Today marks the three-month anniversary of the tragedy at Sandy Hook. What better time to take action to change the existing culture of gun violence in our country. Please take this opportunity to enact meaningful common sense gun control and gun safety legislation. **THE PROPOSED BILLS ARE NOT NEARLY STRONG OR COMPREHENSIVE ENOUGH.** Please support a ban on military-style assault weapons, a ban on high capacity ammunition magazines, universal background checks, universal and annual registration renewal, and limits on handgun purchases to one per month.

Respectfully yours,

Lisa Leibowitz  
Redding, CT